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BOSTON PARKS DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORTS

FOR

FRANKLIN PARK 1879-1890

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FRANKLIN PARK COALITION BULLETIN

Jan 1980

A Publication of The Franklin Park Coalition, Inc.
319 Forest Hills Street, Boston, MA 02130 • 522-7431
January, 1983

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Boston Parks Department made its set of Park Reports available to the Coalition for duplication. The Parks Department also provided a copying machine for the Coalition to use. Particular thanks go to John Ruck, Secretary of the Boston Parks Department

Laurel Sutton typed the Reports for publication. She has typed nearly every issue of the Franklin Park Coalition Bulletin since 1978. Laurel is a Board Member of the Franklin Park Coalition.

Richard Heath, Editor

12/20, 1982

PARK DEPARTMENT

CITY OF BOSTON

1876

WEST ROXBURY PARK

From the 2nd Report of the Board of Commissioners of Parks April 24, 1876

5th ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOSTON PARK COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE YEAR 1879

WEST ROXBURY PARK.

During the latter part of the year there has appeared a renewal of interest throughout the community in the subject of providing for a large park, which should be worthy of the city, to be located upon the highlands of West Roxbury.

At the request of the last Board of Aldermen, made Dec. 15, 1879, the Commissioners submitted a Report Dec. 22, 1879 (City Doc. 123), upon the areas and assessed values of sundry estates in West Roxbury, with their recommendations in the premises. Owing to the late date at which the above action was taken, the necessary consideration of so important a matter could not be had, and the subject was referred to the next City Government. The Commissioners respectfully recommend that it be considered at the early convenience of the City Council.

7th ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOSTON PARK COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE YEAR 1881

THE PARK SYSTEM.

The maps of Back Bay Improvement and Arnold Arboretum, issued by this department in 1879, and of Muddy River Improvement in 1881, have been brought together upon one sheet to show their mutual relations, and their connection as a means of access from the heart of the city via the Common and Commonwealth Avenue to Jamaica Pond and the proposed West Roxbury Park. A report by Mr. Olmsted upon the subject follows:

BOSTON, December 29, 1881.

CHARLES H. DALTON, Esq., Chairman of the Park Commission: -

SIR, - The Park system for Boston, advised by your Commission, though of smaller area than that of many other cities, differs from all others in the scope of its landscape design; and this is, in part, due to topographical opportunities possessed by Boston, which, for the purpose in view, are probably unrivalled.

On the other hand, as my counsel has heretofore been asked by several other cities, when engaged with municipal problems of the same general class as that of which your proposed system is offered as a solution, it will not, I trust, be thought beyond my duty if I point to a circumstance which appears to me to be operating as yet not a little to the disadvantage of Boston.

It is that the Boston of today is largely made up of what were formerly a number of distinct local communities, each habituated to regard its public affairs from an independent point of view, and sometimes in a spirit of competition and jealousy toward the others. The larger part of Boston, territorially considered, has till lately been so divided. Possibly, also, the marked topographical divisions of the old city induced separate local interests in an unusual degree.

There is now a habit of looking upon the proposed parks of the city, each apart and independently of its relations to others of the system, as if it were to be of little value except to the people of the districts adjoining it. And this habit is so much evinced by intelligent and generally well-informed citizens that it must be supposed to be an inheritance from those older conditions. It presents a divviculty which should be contended with; for, unquestionably, if it is maintained and allowed influence in legislation, it will be likely to nullify half the value to the city of the properties now proposed to be acquired for parks.

For example, a site has been selected at West Roxbury for a large park, because of the topographical advantages for a particular class of park purposes which nature has there provided. It is not uncommon to hear it referred to as if it were to be a special property of the West Roxbury community, and its chief value lie in what that community would gain from it. If this were just, the project would not be worthy of a moment's consideration. Moreover, if it were to be adopted and carried out in this limited spirit at the cost of the city, the people of the locality would not gain those advantages from it that a wiser policy would have in view for them.

A site for a park to stand by itself and be little used except by those living near it should be a very different one from that for a park designed for more general use, and especially for a park which is to stand as one of a series. In the latter case the fitness of a site will largely be found in its adaptation to supply some form of park refreshment that others of the series are ill-adapted to supply or are naturally excluded from supplying. The qualities of a park which the West Roxbury site offers in generous measure at very moderate cost, could not, for example, be gained in a tenth part of that measure at ten times the cost on the proposed parksite near Chestnut Hill, - "Brighton Park," - or on any other which the city has had under consideration. But the converse is equally true; the Brighton site offers features of great interest, ready made, which could not be as well provided in the West Roxbury tract by an outlay in millions. Moreover, the attempt to introduce the more valuable qualities to be thus found at Brighton in the midst of those to be found at Roxbury, would be destructive of the latter, and any expense incurred for the purpose in behalf of the city would be much worse than wasted. In one word, the aim of design under the policy of the city which your Commission has been so long trying to establish, can

only wisely be to develop qualities in each locality which will give it a more distinctive and grateful interest because of the development of quite other distinctive qualities elsewhere.

The accompanying map shows a series of sites which are now under consideration by the city government, and which your Commission has been authorized to purchase - if it shall be found possible to do so within fixed limits of price - together with the connections which are contemplated between them and by which they would, should the scheme be carried out, be tied to existing city properties.

It will be obvious at a glance, to any one having a superficial knowledge of the several localities named upon the map, that, if due advantage is taken of the distinctive capabilities of each and due respect paid to the distinctive limitations of each, the results to all concerned, of whatever part of the city resident, will be incomparably more interesting and valuable than they can possibly be under a policy such as seems to be commonly entertained of regarding each proposed park and parklet as an independent affair, deriving no interest from its relation to others, and imparting nothing of value to the interest of others.

Regarding the natural opportunities and limitations of the several localities to be named below, it will be found that each will, through a judicious method of improvement, be adapted to induce a distinct impression; and that, in each, the space to be applied to this impression is sufficient for the purpose, yet none too large to accomplish it with a determined avoidance of peep-show and theatrically scenic effects. While, except at West Roxbury, which is the one ground in the entire series to be with strict propriety called a park, the spaces to be taken are nowhere to be broad, the impressions which under judicious designing will be had in view are such as may be obtained within the limited scopes proposed.

The following is a memorandum which may suggest to any one looking at the map one or two of the more distinctive landscape qualities of the several locations mentioned, the note being in each case of the briefest, and intended only to give a slight lead to the imagination: -

MEMORANDUM.

The Common, Public Garden, and Commonwealth Ave. -

Turf, trees, water, and other natural objects unnaturally arranged, but not in the main unpleasingly in consideration of the stately rows of buildings and other architectural and artificial objects with which they must stand associated, and the necessary thoroughfares passing among them.

Charles River Embankment. - Broad bay and river views with a rus-urban background seen from a stately promenade.

Back Bay. - Scenery of a winding, brackish creek, within wooded banks; gaining interest from the meandering course of the water; numerous points and coves softened in their outlines by thickets and with much delicate variety in tone and color through varied, and, in landscape art, novel, forms of perennial and herbaceous growths, the picturesque elements emphasized by a few necessary structures strong but unobtrusive.

Muddy River. - The natural sequence upon slightly higher ground to the last in following up a fresh-water course bordered by passages of rushy meadow and varied slopes from the adjoining upland; trees in group, diversified by thickets and open glades.

Upper Valley of Muddy River. - A chain of picturesque fresh-water ponds, alternating with attractive natural groves and meads, the uppermost of these ponds being -

Jamaica Pond, a natural sheet of water, with quiet, graceful shores, rear banks of varied elevation and contour, for the most part shaded by a fine natural forest-growth to be brought out overhangingly, darkening the water's edge and favoring great beauty in reflections and flickering half-lights. At conspicuous points numerous well-grown pines, happily massed, and picturesquely disposed.

The Arboretum. - (Independently of its imposed features.) Rocky hill-sides, partly wooded with numerous great trees, and a hanging-wood of hemlocks of great beauty. Eminences commanding distant prospects, in one direction seaward over the city, in the other across a charming country-side to blue distant hills.

West Roxbury Park. - Complete escape from the town. Open country. Pastoral scenery. A lovely dale gently winding between low wooded slopes, giving a broad expanse of unbroken turf, lost in the distance under scattered trees.

To the above, as constituent features of the sylvan system of Boston, as had in view by your Commission, are to be added two pieces of ground not shown in the present map; one commanding a close view of the lower harbor, and a distant outlook over the ocean; the other having grandeur of rocks with extraordinary beauty of form and tinting, and such interest of forest wildness as might be looked for in the midst of unpeopled mountains.

The above hint as to what may be ultimately hoped to result from the improvements in progress on the Back Bay, looks in a direction so diverse from that formerly entertained, and which seems still to be

adhered to by many, that it will be right again to briefly characterize that undertaking, at present more prominently before the public than any other of the series.

The leading and only justifying purpose of the Back Bay Improvement, under the present design, is the abatement of a complicated nuisance, threatening soon to be a deadly peril to the whole city as a propagating and breeding-ground of pestilential epidemics. A second purpose is the reconciliation of convenient means of general public communication through the adjoining districts of the city with the means taken to accomplish the first purpose. A third purpose is the dressing and embellishment of the banks, basins, bridges, and causeways, requisite under the first and second, suitably to the relation in which they will stand to the adjoining streets, and the improvements which it is the interest of the city that private enterprise should be encouraged to make upon them. A fourth purpose is to thriftily turn to account whatever shall be found requisite under the first, second, and third, as a distinctive incident, element, and feature in a general scheme of sylvan improvement for the city, looking to the development of local variety harmonizing in one comprehensive design. It may be observed that the continued application of the term park to an undertaking of the character thus indicated tends to perpetuate an unfortunate delusion, and to invite unjust expectations and criticisms.

A like fourfold purpose has controlled the selection of ground and the plan, as shown on the map, of the projected Muddy River Improvement. In general design, these two sections of the park system are one, the only division between the two being a concealed bar, which, in the Muddy River section, will permit fresh-water vegetation to be used along the water sides.

Respectfully submitted,

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED

Landscape Architect Advisory.

9th ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOSTON PARK COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE YEAR 1883

WEST ROXBURY PARK.

Under the order passed Dec. 16, 1881, and amended Nov. 25, 1882, for the taking of lands for a large park at West Roxbury, about 178 acres, costing \$346,250, have been bought and paid for during the past year, and 146 acres, estimated at \$253,750, which were taken under the act, May 25, 1883, remain to be settled for. Of the latter, 79 acres, amounting to \$110,500, are arranged to be paid for when sundry legal complications, affecting the former ownership, are disposed of. Negotiations continue for the payment of the remainder, and for the acquisition of other lands under the recent order providing for an additional appropriation of \$500,000, to extend the limits to this park.

Topographical surveys have been in progress, from which a comprehensive plan for the gradual improvement of the park will be made.

The park lands were opened to the public May 1, and great numbers of people have visited them during the summer. Several large picnics of school-children and charitable societies took place, and games of ball and lawn tennis were frequent, suitable grounds being specially designated for these purposes.

Three policemen have been appointed by the Board for the protection of the grounds and visitors.

West Roxbury Park
From the 9th Annual Report for the Year 1883

Playstead Shelter
From the 15th Annual Report for the Year 1889

Engineer's Report

An engineering party was organized in June to make a complete topographical survey of the land included in and closely adjoining this park. An office was established in the Ellicott house, and the surveys have been actively prosecuted during the past summer and fall. The outside work has been practically completed, and the plan is nearly so. The extension of the park boundaries, as authorized by vote of the last city government, will involve the continuance of this work during a portion of the next season.

10th ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOSTON PARK COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE YEAR 1884

...The plans of the Board contemplate a thoroughfare on the easterly side of the Arboretum running from Centre to South Street, opposite Morton Street, and near the Forest Hills station of the Boston & Providence Railroad. The location of this road is upon the park lands throughout, and should be laid out as a public way and built by the Street Department. It will furnish a direct route from Jamaica Pond, via Orchard and Morton Streets, to the West Roxbury Park and Dorchester, and improve the street plans of this part of Jamaica Plain.

WEST ROXBURY PARK.

The topographical surveys of the West Roxbury Park, which have been in progress during the past two seasons, were completed last fall, and have been protracted upon a map, showing contours of two-foot rise, and all objects affecting the condition of the grounds. A doubly reduced copy of this map with four-foot contours and otherwise simplified to bring it within the scope of a report for general distribution, is herewith presented, together with a report from the Landscape Architect on the general character and value of the lands for park purposes. A design for laying out the park is now being prepared.

The highest point within the park limits is on the Sargent rocks, at the northerly end, near the corner of Walnut Avenue and Seaver Street,

where an altitude of 196 feet above sea level is reached, and from which a general slope, diversified with hills and dales, is maintained to the low level of forty-eight feet at the extreme southerly end, - a total fall of nearly one hundred and fifty feet.

The view from the highest point at the ground level is intercepted by the trees which cover this section, but the old tower still standing commands a fine panorama stretching from the hills of Milton and Brookline on the south and west to the harbor and bay on the north and east, and including the city and adjacent country.

The rocky ground on the westerly side, near Glen Road, rises to a height of 186 feet, whence a fine view to the westward is obtained, the view eastward being obstructed by the dense woods of oaks and pines covering this part of the grounds. The land is here wild and rugged, having picturesque glens and deep ravines, with high and precipitous slopes of rock, rising abruptly in some places from 60 to 100 feet. The lowest point in the park (34 feet) is in this section, near the corner of Forest Hills and Williams Streets. The woodlands here also are of the largest growth and greatest extent, covering about sixty acres.

The highest point on the easterly side is near the stone tower on the Seaver Street and Blue Hill Avenue corner, overlooking a valley to the west interspersed with groves and isolated copses. The view from the top of the stone tower is more extended, commanding the park lands and farther country to the Blue Hills.

The highest grounds at the southerly side are on a hill of 158 feet, and on the rock, near the corner of Scarborough and Morton Streets, which is 136 feet high and 65 feet above the ground at its base. The country here is quite well covered with groves of deciduous trees, mostly oaks, interspersed with a few large pines.

Three shelter houses have been erected the past season on eminences commanding extensive views, and generally visible from all parts of the park. One of these is near Walnut Avenue, another at the ball-field near Glen Road, and the third on the hill, near Scarborough Street. They are already much used by visitors to the park.

The Sewall house on Blue Hill Avenue, between Glen Road and Williams Street, will be fitted up early in the season with a refectory and conveniences for the refreshment of visitors to the park. This house, standing on a hill of 168 feet elevation, commanding picturesque views, is well adapted for the purpose, and conveniently located near the Highland Street railway-station.

The Thomas house has been used as an office of design and superintendence for the Landscape Architect, and as a residence for the Assistant Landscape Gardener.

A temporary house for propagating trees, shrubs, and woody plants has been built, and ground for a nursery prepared near by.

The park has been largely used by the community during the past season. It is thronged on Sundays and holidays, and the number of week-day visitors is increasing. Additional grounds have been provided for ball-playing and tennis, and the picnic groves have been almost constantly occupied by school picnics and children's excursions. The Church house, at the corner of Forest Hills and Morton Streets, was placed at the disposal of a society for giving mothers and children a holiday in the country, and it was occupied regularly through the season.

REPORT ON WEST ROXBURY PARK.

To the Park Commissioners: -

GENTLEMEN, - I respectfully submit the following propositions in respect to the plan of West Roxbury Park.

1. The prime object will be to present favorably to public enjoyment a body of rural and sylvan scenery, large in scale, simple and tranquil in character; and in contrast and as a foil to this, passages of a wild, rugged, picturesque and forest-like aspect.

2. It is desirable that the larger part of the park should be of such character that it can easily be kept in good order and sustain its design without great expense, and that for this purpose it should have less of a garden-like and more of a distinctively park and forest-like character than is now generally attempted in American parks.

3. If, apart from the main provisions above suggested, and without seriously interfering with them or excessively restricting their extent, the following proposed arrangements can be included in the general design, it is desirable that they should be:-

A. A place of general congregation where carriages, horsemen, and foot visitors may be brought together without clashing and under conditions favorable to the enjoyment of a gay throng.

B. A ground suitable for public festivities, especially for parades of children such as are made on the Brooklyn Park; also for displays of fireworks, balloons, and other exhibitions. This would relieve the management of the park of a responsibility elsewhere found very embarrassing.

C. Provisions by which families will be encouraged to make basket-meals and picnics on the park, and by which, especially mothers with young children, unable to go out of town during the summer, may be invited to make lengthened visits to it.

Lastly, if suitable ground can be found that may be reserved without crippling the park for its main object, it is desirable that the plan should admit of the city's holding in readiness a sufficient area to be leased to a proper organization for establishing, by private means, a public Zoological and Exotic Garden, as has been done in connection with the public parks of the cities of London, Paris, Dublin, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Cologne, Philadelphia and others, and as has been repeatedly attempted in New York unsuccessfully because the primary plan of the park did not admit of it.

Respectfully,
FRED'K LAW OLMSTED,
Landscape Architect.

22d December, 1884

11th ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOSTON PARK COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE YEAR 1885

FRANKLIN PARK.

The following action has been taken by the Board in the matter of naming the so-called West Roxbury Park, which title has been considered only a temporary one, suggested by the location of the lands: -

IN BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS, November 10, 1885.

The Chairman read the following from the records of the meeting of the Board of Aldermen, on January 23, 1882: -

FRANKLIN FUND.

Alderman Stebbins submitted the following: -

The Committee appointed to examine the accounts of S.F. McCleary, the treasurer of the Franklin Fund, have attended to that duty, and report that they find said accounts have been correctly kept and the interest duly collected, and the securities, which were examined by the Committee, were found in proper condition. It appears, from this examination, that the condition of the fund at this date is as follows: -

Amount of fund, February 1, 1881.	\$259,068.86
Interest, accrued and collected	10,362.40
Total.	\$269,431.26

The above amount is invested as follows: -

Deposits in Massachusetts Hospital Life.	\$267,042.98
Balance of seven bonds for loans.	920.00
In Suffolk Savings-Bank.	1,467.98
Cash.	.30
	<hr/>
	\$269,431.26

His Honor the Mayor having suggested in his inaugural address the application of a portion of this fund, when due, to the extinction of the debt of the West Roxbury Park, the Committee desire to report the following facts from the information of the Board. By the will of Dr. Franklin, approved in 1791, he directed that the sum of money left by him to the Town of Boston (one thousand pounds), and known as the Franklin Fund, should be loaned at interest, and allowed to accumulate for one hundred years, at which period he estimated it would reach the amount of £131,000, or \$582,000. Of this sum, the trustees at that date (1891) were empowered to lay out \$100,000 in some important public work or works, and the balance of the fund should again be put at interest, and allowed to accumulate for one hundred years, when the Town of Boston was to dispose of a portion of the fund, and the State of Massachusetts to use the remainder. Owing to various causes the fund was not very productive in its early years, or it would have reached a larger figure than it now exhibits. It will be observed, however, that its annual growth at this time exceeds \$10,000, and in all probability, in 1891 or 1892 the fund will reach \$400,000. Of this amount it would seem proper to set aside \$50,000 as a nucleus for a new accumulation, as directed by the testator. This would leave the sum of \$350,000 to be devoted to the payment of the loan for the purchase of the West Roxbury Park, to be called "Franklin Park," in perpetual recognition of the generosity of the great Bostonian to his native city. The Committee feel that this fund can be devoted to no more important "public work" than the purchase of this noble park, which cannot be destroyed or stolen, but will be an ever-enduring monument to Franklin's memory. With these views the Committee feel that it will not be deemed inappropriate by the coming generation, if this Board ventures to put upon its record some expression of its opinion as to the future disposition of the fund by its successors in 1891-92. They therefore offer the following resolutions.

S.B. STEBBINS,
THOS. N. HART,
Committee.

Resolved, That in the opinion of this Board, comprising a majority of the Trustees for the "Franklin Fund," it is expedient and highly desirable that the proportion of said fund, which will be available in 1891-92 for investment in "some public work," should be devoted to the extinguishment of the debt incurred for the purchase of the West Roxbury Park.

Resolved, That in the event of such disposition of the said portion of the Franklin Fund, the park thus purchased should be called "Franklin Park," in honor of the testator who has so generously endowed his native town.

The report was accepted and the resolves passed.

The Chairman then said he brought the question of the name of Boston's large park before the Board at this time because before the publication of the new plan its name ought to be authoritatively determined. He also thought we ought to make known to the City Council our appreciation of the honor done this Board by the proposed appropriation of the hundred years' earnings of the Franklin Fund to the benefit of our principal park.

The great need of the park would be means for its development and improvement. It could remain measurable in its present wild and natural condition for a few years, but by the time Franklin's hundred years had expired, the people would wish to see it assuming a finished condition. The fund, therefore, would be more useful in developing and finishing the park than in paying off its funded debt. That, however, could be arranged when the time approached. It would be well now, therefore, to adopt and accept the proposition of the City Council, and give to the park that has, because of its location, been called the West Roxbury Park, the name of Franklin Park.

The name West Roxbury, or Roxbury, however pleasant and familiar, is merely a local name. The name of Franklin is one of the glories of the nation.

As patriot, diplomatist, statesman, and philosopher, he won the gratitude of his country, and the admiration of the world.

His colleague, Mr. Adams, wrote: "Franklin's reputation was more universal than that of Leibnitz or Newton, Frederick the Great or Voltaire, and his character more beloved and esteemed than all of them... If a collection could be made of all the Gazettes of Europe for the latter half of the 18th Century, a greater number of panegyrical paragraphs upon 'le grand' Franklin would appear, it is believed, than upon any other man that ever lived."

But to us he is connected by closer ties than these general ones. Here was his birthplace and we are to appropriate to the daily use of our people the accumulation of his bounty, the results of his providence and foresight; and if for any reason the Franklin Fund shall be diverted to some other use, still to this beautiful park, devoted to the refreshment, and cheer, and delight of all, but more especially of those whose walk is limited to a crowded city, what name is more appropriate than that of Franklin; what name fuller of inspiration, and promise, and reward?

On motion of Mr. Maguire, it was voted: That, for the reasons set forth in the remarks of the Chairman, the park heretofore called West Roxbury Park shall be named and known as "Franklin Park."

12th ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOSTON PARK COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE YEAR 1886

Park Construction Summary:

Under a special appropriation of \$10,000 for the purpose, the Board has cleared the ground of many of its dividing-walls and fences, using the stone in the construction of a terrace overlooking what is designed to be the principal playground of the park. It was thought best to make this disposition of the stone at once in order to avoid the extra expense of twice handling. The grounds in front have been cleared of supernumerary trees and boulders, and should be properly graded and surfaced for the purposes of recreation as soon as possible. It is the desire of the Board also to construct the driveways surrounding the field at once, in order that it may be a complete thing in itself, and furnish a short circuit drive entirely within the park. The terrace should also be finished and planted with shrubs and vines as designed. The woods have been somewhat cleared and opened, and most of the fruit trees have been taken away, thus removing a source of much trouble and lawlessness. Several buildings have been removed and the cellars filled, and large quantities of poisonous ivy have been uprooted. The large mansion-house, on what will be called Refectory Hill, near Blue Hill Avenue, has been rented and fitted up as a refectory, where refreshments of all kinds are served. The house at the corner of Walnut and Williams Streets

has also been fitted up for minor refreshment purposes. In either of these houses proper attention will be given to the wants of visitors, who are free to occupy them as long as may be necessary. Drinking-water has been supplied to the ballfield through an iron pipe with two fountains. As early as the second week in March visitors began to frequent the park, and the latter part of the month found the boys using the ball-field and play-ground in large numbers. The Sunday attendance through the season from March to November, as reported by the park police, ran from 3,000 to 20,000, with an average attendance of 11,000 for each Sunday reported, and of 15,000 in fine weather. No computation of the week-day attendance has been attempted, except in the matter of picnics, of which there were 42 reported from 15 different societies or charities, with an average attendance of about 200 persons.

The Board recommends that the streets running through the park lands be discontinued as public ways, and that Walnut Street be continued through Sigourney Street to Forest Hills Street, in order to give an outlet to Walnut Street, outside the park limits. In connection with this change a triangular piece of land at the junction of Walnut and Sigourney Streets will have to be acquired for park purposes, and the Board recommends that an appropriation by loan of \$20,000 be made at once for this purpose.

The plan for this park, as finally completed by the Landscape Architect and adopted by the Board, will be published in a supplementary report.*

Report of the Landscape Architect:

The Commission having approved the preliminary plan for Franklin Park, and wishing to begin the work of clearing the ground of incumbrances, concluded early in the summer to finally adopt so much of the plan as covered a territory of above thirty acres at the north end of the property, adjoining Walnut Street. This division of the ground is designed to be adapted for use as a play-ground in connection with a ledge that borders it, a platform eight hundred feet long and about eight feet in height is planned. During the summer a small force has been employed in collecting the stone lying upon the surface of the ground, drawing it, and constructing the platform from it. The work done thus far consists of about six hundred feet of retaining-wall averaging eight

*Notes on the Plan of Franklin Park, 1886. F.L. Olmsted.
Reprinted in 1978 by the Franklin Park Coalition.

feet in height, built with a front of dark, weather-stained field stone with a concave battered face. Chambers of soil have been formed in the rear of this outer wall to sustain plants intended to grow, through numerous apertures, over the face of the wall, and to merge in effect with others to be scattered along the base. A sufficient amount of stone has been lifted and awaits removal for the completion of the wall, and a part of it is intended to be planted in the spring, the plants needed being for the most part now under propagation or in the nursery. If suitably proceeded with, the design of the work may be essentially realized in three years.

January 1, 1886

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED
Landscape Architect

13th ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOSTON PARK COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE YEAR 1887

Park Construction Summary:

Franklin Park. - The work on this park has been pushed with vigor. The Playstead is completed, and only awaits that the greensward may become a compact turf. The road around it has had so much work done upon it that it will be ready for use before the end of another season. The bulk of the work on the Overlook has been done. Its completion is delayed by the difficulty of procuring the stone for the parapet. This will also be ready for use before next winter.

The Board intends during the next season to make all progress possible with the roads in the Country Park. It should be borne in mind that in the taking of stone from the Playstead, in the laying of drains, and in other particulars, an enormous amount of the work done upon Franklin Park is now under ground and out of sight.

Engineers Report

William H. Jackson, City Engineer

Work was begun here in early April. The Playstead was first cleared of stone, the stone being broken up and deposited where it could be conveniently used on the driveway. A large area, about 9 acres,

being too low to be drained, the soil was removed, and it was then filled, the greatest depth of filling being 6 feet; the filling came from the excavations for the driveway and its adjoining slopes. After the filling was done the soil was restored; drains were laid for draining the Playstead; the field of 27 acres received a top dressing of stable manure and other fertilizers, and was then ploughed and tilled through the summer. In September grass-seed was sown which, before cold weather set in, was well started.

The grading of the drives around the Playstead has been carried on through the season, and is substantially completed. About 8,200 square yards of roadway has been ballasted, of which about 6,000 square yards are covered with crushed stone and only require covering with a coating of binding gravel or screenings from the crushed stones to be completed; 2,246 square yards of gutters have been paved with rectangular granite blocks; 6,740 square yards of walks have been covered with crushed stone, and 1,000 square yards entirely finished. Catch-basins and drains have been built for draining the whole of the drives around the Playstead, except for a short distance near the entrance to The Country Park. Usually 2-inch tile drains have been laid under the gutters on each side of the drive. Generally the method of construction of the driveways is the same as that described for the Arboretum, except that the roadway, gutters, grass border, and walks are wider at Franklin Park than at the Arboretum, and the gutters are paved with granite blocks instead of cobblestones.

The catch-basins both here and at the Arboretum are of the form shown in the accompanying sketch. The total length of vitrified pipe-drains laid is 4,397 feet, varying in diameter from 8 inches to 18 inches. The length of tile drain is 7,200 feet, 2 inches and 3 inches in diameter. The number of man-holes built is 5 and the number of catch-basins 25.

A stone-crushing plant was purchased, and this has crushed all the stone used for surfacing the drives and walks.

About 1,200 lineal feet of the circuit drive around The Country Park has been graded, and work on this drive is now in progress.

The Overlook. - The wall which supports the Overlook has been completed, with the exception of the coping. The walk which the wall supports has been graded, and covered with crushed stone. The site of the proposed building has been partially excavated, and a drain to connect the building with the sewer in Sigourney Street is being built.

Administration Buildings. - The dwelling-house at the corner of Williams and Walnut streets has been occupied as an office for the police and engineering forces since the park was laid out. During the past

season there have been built in the rear of it a carpenter shop, a blacksmith shop, and a yard and sheds for the storage of materials and tools.

The dwelling-house and stable have been painted, as have also the dwelling-house and stable occupied by the Assistant Landscape Gardener.*

*William L. Fischer.

14th ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOSTON PARK COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE YEAR 1888

Park Construction Summary:

Franklin Park. - The Playstead district, with its entrances, the bordering roads, and the Overlook, has been completed and opened to the public. The shelter-house is practically finished, and a flag-staff has been erected. The valley-gate to the Country Park and a part of the park wall on the line of Glen Lane have been partly built, and the lane partially graded for half its length. The circuit drive has been subgraded to the location of the Ellicott arch, which is now being built. The drives and ride through the Wilderness have been laid out and cleared of trees, and much stone has been removed from the Ellicottdale green.

Engineer's Report,

William H. Jackson, City Engineer

Drives and Walks. - The Glen, Pierpont, and Playstead Roads, together with a section of the Greeting to connect the two latter, and the entrances from Walnut Avenue, have been completed.

The walks adjoining these roads have also been completed with the exception of a short length in the rear of the Shelter building. Glen Lane for a length of about 2,400 feet and the circuit drive in the Country Park for a length of about 3,000 feet have been graded.

On March 24 a contract was made with S. & R. J. Lombard for furnishing paving-blocks, and 111,106 blocks were delivered at \$48 per M.

The Overlook. - The wall has been entirely completed and the face of it planted. Seats have been constructed of stone and covered with oak slats. The walk and the steps leading from the driveway have been finished, and four rustic drinking-fountains have been built of the stone found upon the park.

The Shelter. - This building is nearly completed, the excavation, the foundations, the masonry side-walls, the chimneys above the roof, and the outside steps having been constructed by the park force, while the carpenter work has been done by contract, under the direction of the City Architect.* All the exposed masonry is of field stone, laid so as to show weather-worn and mossy-faces. The remainder of the building is covered with rived cypress shingles.

Playstead Green. - The grass-seed sown in the fall of 1887 has produced a fine turf, the care of which has required considerable labor, the grass having been kept cut short by means of lawnmowers.

A flagstaff, consisting of a single stick 105 feet in length, has been erected. It stands upon a ledge, in about the centre of the green, and rests upon a cast-iron foot bolted to the ledge, the staff being supported laterally by three wire-rope guys attached to anchor-bolts set in the rock.

Gateways. - At the entrance to the Country Park, from the Playstead district, it is designed to have gates for closing this part of the park at night. Plans for these gateways were prepared by Messrs. Walker & Best, architects. There will be four wrought-iron gates, two for the driveway and one for each of the footpath entrances, which will run upon tracks laid across the driveway and walks. When the Country Park is open, these gates will be run into chambers of rustic masonry, which have been built for that purpose. Adjoining the gateway, about 230 feet of retaining-wall has been built on the line of Glen Lane.

Ellicott Arch. - The circuit drive will cross a footpath leading from the entrance at the junction of Williams Street with Forest Hills Street upon an arch of masonry. Work upon this arch was begun in mid-summer, but was discontinued when the force was needed on other work.

The work has recently been resumed, and the arch will be completed early next season.

*Arthur Vinal

15th ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOSTON PARK COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE YEAR 1889

Park Construction Summary:

Franklin Park. - The Playstead Shelter and the grounds and walks about it were finished, and, together with the Playstead, were opened to the public on the 12th of June with appropriate ceremonies.

The Walnut-Avenue Entrances were also finished early in the season, and the grounds about them planted. A rustic fountain of field stone, supplied with water from a neighboring spring, was erected near the Playstead Road.

The Old Trail Road entering the Park from Seaver Street, opposite Humboldt Avenue, has been finished and the slopes graded.

The valley gate to the Country Park and about 3,500 feet of the Park wall on the line of Glen Lane have been completed. Glen Lane (for heavy traffic) has been graded for two-thirds of the distance across the Park, and about half the whole length of the road macadamized and furnished with edgestones and gutters.

The circuit drive has been completed and opened to travel from the valley gate to Walnut Avenue near Ellicott Street, - about one-half mile, - the slopes graded and some of the adjacent walks built. This included

Valley Gate
From the 15th Annual Report for the Year 1889

Ellicott Arch - East Front
From the 18th Annual Report for the Year 1892

Dedication of The Playstead
From the 15 th Annual Report for the Year 1889

Ellicott arch, which carries the drive and ride over the walk from Williams-Street Entrance to Ellicottdale. The ride has been partly subgraded along this part of the circuit drive.

The circuit drive from Walnut Avenue, near Ellicott Street, has been subgraded to the road leading to the Dairy and Scarboro Hill, and the subgrading of this road is now in progress. Some work has also been done on the Loop Road in the Wilderness.

Ellicottdale has been cleared of stone, drained, and mostly graded.

The upper part of the valley southerly from the valley gate, including the old location of Williams Street, has been cleared and graded, and the main line of the Park drainage has been extended.

There is but little more required to finish the surface of the Country Park as it is designed to be left for use by the public, and the Board hopes that it can be finished next season, not including the circuit drive from Scarboro Hill around the southerly and easterly sides to Glen Lane.

A flock of 56 sheep has been obtained for the Country Park, and a temporary sheep-fold provided.

Engineer's Report

William H. Jackson, City Engineer

Drives and Walks. - During the year the Old Trail Road, from Seaver Street, opposite Humboldt Avenue, to the westerly end of the Greeting, and the adjacent walks have been completed.

Glen Lane has been completed from Glen Road to a point 300 feet beyond the valley gate, and for 600 feet further has been subgraded.

The circuit drive has been completed from the valley-gate Entrance to near the corner of Walnut and Ellicott Streets, and the walks in its vicinity are nearly finished. The walks in the rear of the Playstead Shelter have been completed. About 1,200 lineal feet of the Loop Road in the Wilderness has been sub-graded, and a portion of it covered with stone. Work is not in progress subgrading the drive from the present terminus of the circuit drive to the top of Scarboro Hill.

Playstead Shelter and Green. - A spring near the junction of the Playstead Road and the Greeting has been preserved and carried by a pipe across the road to a rustic fountain or covered pool, where it furnishes a continuous flow of good drinking-water. A flag and pennant were purchased for the large flagstaff, and the pennant has been displayed on every pleasant day except Sundays and holidays, when the ensign has been shown.

Gateways. - The valley gate, at the entrance to the Country Park, from the Playstead district, has been completed in accordance with the description given in the last annual report.

Boundary Wall for the Country Park. - A wall has been built along the southerly side of Glen Road and of Glen Lane from the westerly boundary of the Park to a point on Glen Lane about 900 feet east of the valley gate.

Ellicott Arch. - This bridge, which is a brick masonry arch, 71 feet in length, 17.5 feet in span, and 15 feet in height above the walk, has been completed. The ends of the arch and the adjoining retaining walls are of rustic masonry, built of field stone found in the vicinity. Arched recesses were constructed along the sides, in which seats are to be placed.

Ellicottdale. - This ground was generally a rocky swamp, and its treatment involved a large amount of labor; hundreds of boulders had to be broken and removed, and nearly the whole area required to be sub-drained; much of the ground also needed grading in order to make it suitable for its intended use. This work, with the exception of ploughing and seeding, has been nearly finished.

Drainage of Nazingdale, - About two-fifths of the whole Park is included in one drainage area, the outlet for which is through a culvert under Canterbury Street. At the head of this drainage area is the easterly portion of the Playstead and a part of Long Crouch Woods. Consequently a main drain extending through the valley would be nearly a mile in length, and at its lower end would be about five feet in diameter. It had been thought that the summer flow of water from the valley would be so slight that an open channel or brook would be unsightly in dry weather, but the expense of a covered drain being so great it was determined to make an open channel through the lower part of the valley. This channel has been treated so as to have the appearance of a natural brook, and work upon it is nearly finished. At the lower part of the valley a temporary dam has been built, which floods about three acres of ground for a small skating pond. The covered drain ends at a point about fifty feet south of the old location of Williams Street, and above this point the main drain, with the exception of about 150 feet, has been completed as far as the Old Trail Road.

16th ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOSTON PARK COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE YEAR 1890

Park Construction Summary:

Franklin Park. - Glen Road Entrance and adjacent walks, and Glen Lane for two-thirds of its length, have been finished, and the remaining length of Glen Lane partly graded. The park wall has been extended along Glen Lane as far as the lane has been completed.

Circuit Drive, from Valley Gate to its junction with the drive leading to the Columbia-Street Entrance, and the wheelway of the latter entrance from Blue Hill Avenue to the Country Park, have been completed, and the foundations laid for the gateway at the entrance to the Country Park.

On the southerly side of the Park, the circuit drive has been extended to its junction with the Scarboro-Hill Drive, and the latter drive and concourse on Scarboro Hill, together with the walk and stone steps leading from the dairy site to the summit of the hill, have also been completed.

Loop Road has been subgraded and ballasted, the gutters paved, and the drains and catch-basins, a retaining wall to support a portion of the road, and the stone steps on an approach from the circuit drive have been built.

About 1,500 lineal feet of ride and the walks adjoining the completed part of the circuit drive have been finished. The lower portions of Playstead green have been under-drained, the brook and small pond in Nazingdale have been deepened, and the banks graded.

Ellicottdale has been completed, together with the walks around it, except a small section on the easterly side. The masonry for the arbor and bowers for picnic parties on Schoolmaster Hill is nearly finished, and two drinking- fountains have been built and connected with the water supply.

The flock of sheep now numbers 115, and a number of peafowl and pigeons have been placed in the park.

LAKE IN FRANKLIN PARK.

In the plan of Franklin Park of 1885 no provision for artificial water was made, it being thought by the Landscape Architects and City Engineer that the watershed was too limited to supply a lake or pond of any considerable size with water during the summer season. But the water afforded by a number of springs and by under-drainage of the Playstead and adjoining grounds, when collected into one channel, was found to have a continual flow through the dry season, and during the winter of 1889 and 1890 it was allowed to flood the lower levels of the Nazingdale meadow to afford skating, as it also has been this winter. At the suggestion of the Board, followed by the request of many citizens of the district, which later found expression in a petition signed by Hon. Moody Merrill, Hon. Paul H. Kendrick, Francis W. Kittredge, and fifty-three others, the Landscape Architects set about the study of a revision of the plan which should provide for such a moderate water-basin as could very likely be maintained, without stagnation, by the water available in summer.

These investigations are still in progress, no plan having yet been sufficiently elaborated to be submitted. When these investigations are completed, and the question of artificial water area determined, the Board will issue a new map of the Park for distribution.

Engineer's Report,

E.W. Howe, Assistant City Engineer.*

Drives, Rides, and Walks. - That portion of Glen Road which follows the location of the old road and the adjacent walks has been completed to the westerly line of the park.

Glen Lane at its easterly end has been finished as far as the crossing of the old road, and has been partially graded for the remaining portion to Blue Hill Avenue.

*Howe was Engineer-in-Charge of Park Construction.

The circuit drive has been finished from valley gate eastward to its junction with the drive leading to Blue Hill Avenue, opposite Columbia Street. The walks near this part of the circuit drive have also been finished.

The entrance from Columbia Street has been completed and foundations laid for a gateway at the entrance to the Country Park.

The circuit drive on the southerly side of the park has been extended to its junction with the drive leading to the summit of Scarboro Hill.

The Scarboro Hill drive and the concourse at the summit of the hill have been completed, the latter requiring a retaining-wall to support it. The walk from the site of the proposed dairy to the top of Scarboro Hill has been finished, including a long flight of stone steps.

Loop Road has been entirely sub-graded, the gutters paved, drains and catch-basins constructed, and the roadway ballasted; there only remains the surfacing of the latter with crushed stone, when the road will be ready for use. This will require but a short time after spring opens. A retaining-wall, to support a portion of this drive, and a flight of stone steps on an approach from the circuit drive have been built.

About 1,500 linear feet of ride have been finished.

The fifteen-ton steam road roller, purchased in the spring, has been of great assistance in the construction of roads and walks.

Playstead Green. - The lower portions of this ground have been under-drained by the laying of 6,310 linear feet of agricultural tiles.

Boundary Wall. - This wall has been extended along Glen Lane as far as the crossing of the old Glen Road.

Ellicottdale. - This ground has been seeded, and is now completed, together with the walks around it, except a small part on the easterly side where the gardener's cottage stands, and where a road was left for the purpose of hauling stone from the quarry.

Nazingdale. = The channel of the brook has been excavated as far as the small pond south of Abbottswood; the pond has been deepened and the banks of both the pond and brook have been graded, so that this portion of the park may be considered finished.

Schoolmaster Hill. The masonry-work of the proposed arbor for picnic parties has been nearly finished and two drinking-fountains built. A four-inch water-pipe was laid from the main pipe in circuit drive for supplying water to the fountains.

Miscellaneous. - The flock of sheep has increased during the year from 56 to 115, and the yield of wool was 347 lbs.

The six peafowl, purchased in the spring, have been kept at the Overlook; these have increased in number to eleven.

A flock of pigeons has been placed in the dove-cote in the Playstead Shelter.

The temporary skating pond in Nazingdale was not much used last winter as there were but few days when the ice was strong enough for skating; during the present winter, however, there have already been about two weeks of skating, and large numbers of young people have enjoyed it.